

April 4, 2005

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
The Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the members of the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA), I am writing to urge Congress to pass the U.S.-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) with Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua as soon as possible.

As the principal trade association of the software and digital information industry, the more than 600 members of SIIA develop and market software and electronic content for business, education, consumers and the Internet. SIIA's members are software companies, ebusinesses, and information service companies, as well as many electronic commerce companies. Our membership consists of some of the largest and oldest technology enterprises in the world, as well as many smaller and newer companies. International trade is vitally important to our industry.

SIIA and its member companies strongly support passage of the DR-CAFTA. The benefits of this agreement to our industry include the liberalization of services commitments, which enable U.S. technology companies to benefit not only from the sales of high quality technology, but also to ensure effective market access to this region. All six nations agreed to use a "negative list" approach, whereby all sectors are deemed open to liberalization unless specific exceptions apply. Additionally, the non-discrimination and national treatment for digital products such as software, and strong intellectual property protections are also important elements of this agreement.

Passage of this agreement is critical to success of the overall U.S. trade agenda, and this agreement contains several provisions of particular importance to the U.S. technology industry, generally. The agreement features important tariff reductions to make U.S. technology exports more competitive internationally.

Passage of CAFTA-DR is also essential to maintaining the momentum for multi-lateral negotiations on services, which is vital to our industry. In addition to the benefits outlined above, Congressional passage of the DR-CAFTA will send a strong message to the other countries in Latin America that we believe in building strong economic alliances with our trading partners in the Western Hemisphere. Moreover, it sends to the world the message that the United States remains committed to trade and investment liberalization in the many on-going trade negotiations.

We look forward to working with you to pass this important agreement.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Wasch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ken" and last name "Wasch" clearly distinguishable.

Ken Wasch
President